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Positive Results from Wetlands Restoration Study

Baltimore, Md.- Preliminary results from a restoration project of degraded wetlands in the Upper Susquehanna River basin show encouraging improvements in water quality and biodiversity.

The research, conducted at the State University of New York (SUNY) College at Oneonta's Biological Field Station at Cooperstown, New York, was conducted as a collaborative partnership among federal, state and local government agencies, and not-for-profit institutions.

Agencies included the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the New York Department of Environmental Conservation, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resource Conservation Service, Ducks Unlimited, the Upper Susquehanna River Coalition, the SUNY Research Foundation and two Otsego County agencies; the Soil and Water Conservation District and the Water Quality Coordinating Committee.

The purpose of the study, funded with $1.2 million secured by Rep. Sherwood Boehlert (R-NY-24), is to restore wetlands which have been degraded by human activity, according to Amy Guise, a project manager for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. "The results of the study will help determine whether additional acres in the Upper Susquehanna basin will be restored. Preliminary results to date are good," said Guise. She added, "Destroying or degrading wetlands can lead to serious consequences, such as increased flooding, species extinction and a decline in water quality. By preserving and restoring valuable wetlands, we can avoid these consequences."

The study's principal investigator, Scott Fickbohm, a research support specialist at the SUNY College at Oneonta's Field Biological Field Station, explained that wetlands have the ability to act as a filter by absorbing nutrients from surface waters. "This function is important for the health of the watershed including Otsego Lake and the Susquehanna River which flows to the Chesapeake Bay."

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Fickbohm, who coordinates with federal, state, & local agencies to monitor water quality for wetlands restoration, noted that healthy wetland ecosystems provide a unique habitat that supports a wide variety of plants, birds and amphibians.

“The study sites demonstrated, for the most part, the capacity for nutrient retention, increased avian and amphibian biodiversity restoration and a good baseline was set for vegetation monitoring,” noted the SUNY researcher.

“The results provide an important link between wetland management decisions and environmental impacts and are the basis for recommendations on how to improve the process for additional Corps wetland restoration projects in the Upper Susquehanna River basin,” concluded Fickbohm.

For additional information about the study, contact Amy Guise at (410) 962-3457, or Scott Fickbohm at (607) 547-8778.

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